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ABSTRACT

Latinos are moving out of historically Hispanic communities in Texas and Florida and relocating in the deep South. This demographic change can disrupt social patterns, add tension to social relations, and change the character of social institutions such as schools. Population projections indicate school enrollment for Whites will decrease and Hispanic and other minority enrollments will increase. The most significant challenge facing the Latino community is the low educational achievement level among Latinos. Over the last 2 decades, the Latino-White high school completion gap has persisted around 30 percentage points. Gaps in school completion rates between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students remain after controlling for social class, language proficiency, and immigrant status. In mathematics, science, and reading, the South places below national averages, Latinos lag behind Whites, and Southern Latinos lag even further behind. The dropout rate for Hispanics is 2.5 times the rate for Blacks and 3.5 times the rate for Whites. Changes in the level of Latino participation in the educational system will require increasing such resources as qualified teachers, facilities, and funding. In addition, changes in educators' mindset must occur to address the inequality of access and participation for Latinos. Fifteen tables and figures present demographic and educational data. (Contains 16 references, 8 figures, and 7 tables.) (TD)

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"CHANGES IN RURAL AMERICA: PRODUCER AND COMMUNITY STRATEGIES"

theme of

Southern Rural Sociological Association Annual Meeting
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Fort Worth, Texas

LATINOS IN THE SOUTH: EDUCATION TRENDS AND OUTCOMES

presented by:

Cruz C. Torres

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Introduction

It is a well-documented fact that Latinos are one of the fastest growing cultural groups in the United States. And recently released census figures indicate the projected increases for Hispanics underestimated the Hispanic population growth. Nevertheless, the increased growth has not been accompanied by a significant improvement in overall status for Latinos, especially in education. Latinos, in general, have made an unacceptably slow progress in education. Together, the increase in population and the low education attainment of Hispanics present especial challenges for public and social policy and the social and economic well being of the states in which they predominate. Socioeconomic and linguistic differences place Latinos in a uniquely disadvantaged position in today's technological age. It is safe to say that the most significant challenge facing the Latino community and the nation today and in the future is education. Especially challenging is the low level of educational achievement among Latinos. How is the current demographic shift going to further aggravate the need for and delivery of education for Hispanics in America? In the South? The education system in the South already lags behind national achievement scores and graduation rates.

Current problems in Hispanic education include increased school segregation, under-enrollment of LEP students in bilingual classes, high dropout rates of Latino students, lagging achievement in reading and math skills, pervasive inequities in school funding, and curriculum differences. In this paper I address 1) shifts in Latino population settlement patterns 2) educational attainment of Hispanics in general, 3) Hispanic student enrollment in the Southern states, 4) Southern States' testing, graduation and dropout data for Hispanic students. Finally, I suggest the first basic steps on how schools can address the needs of their culturally diverse students and their families.

Population Shifts

First, let us examine the shifts in the distribution of the Hispanic population. Whether pulled by the region's labor needs or driven by their dreams for a better life, an ever-increasing number of Latinos are moving out of historically Hispanic communities in Texas and Florida and relocating in the deep South.[a] Increasingly Latinos are drawn to Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, etc. where the booming economy provides ample work opportunities (Butler 1998; Rural Migration News 1998; Stawowy 1998). Demographers have long been forecasting the increased numbers and diversity of Hispanics. However, the most challenging demographic shift may not be the increase in population size nor the increased national diversity but the shifts in migration and settlement patterns. These demographic changes can disrupt established social patterns, add tension to social relations and change the character of our social institutions, such as the delivery and outcomes of education.

Because the trend is so recent or the numbers so small, data on the shift in settlement patterns is tentative until Census 2000 data becomes available. Table 1 provides the 1995 Hispanic population by state as well as Hispanic population projections for each of the Southern states. These population projections strongly suggest that the "winds of change" (Aponte 1997, p.3) are now visiting the South and Southeast region of the United States. By 2025, the projected numeric changes will at least double the Hispanic population in the targeted states. Nationally, Texas and Florida will rank 2 and 3 in numerical change in Latino population for this time period.

Table 1: Hispanics in the South by State

	Population				30 Year Hispanic Population Growth				
	Number* 1995	Percent 1995	Number* 2025	Percent 2025	Numerical* Change	U.S. Rank by Numerical Change	Percent Change	U.S. Rank by Percent Change	Percent of Voters 2000
Alabama	32	0.7	63	1.5	32	41	99.8	45	0.7
Arkansas	27	1.1	67	2.2	39	39	138.8	21	1.2
Florida	1,955	13.8	4,944	23.9	3,000	3	152.9	16	15.0
Georgia	150	2.1	346	3.5	195	19	131.0	27	2.2
Kentucky	27	0.7	55	1.3	29	42	106.0	40	0.8
Louisiana	105	2.4	227	4.4	122	26	116.7	34	2.7
Mississippi	19	0.7	39	1.3	20	46	101.0	44	0.8
North Carolina	100	1.4	210	2.2	110	30	110.3	36	1.4
Oklahoma	104	3.2	245	6.1	141	23	134.1	24	3.1
South Carolina	36	1.0	81	1.8	46	36	122.9	32	1.0
Tennessee	45	0.9	104	1.5	57	34	125.1	31	0.9
Texas	5,173	27.6	10,230	37.6	5,100	2	97.7	46	26.0
Virginia	209	3.2	538	6.4	329	14	157.9	13	3.5

* Population numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Data Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

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Public School Enrollment in the South

Because enrollment in elementary and secondary grades is mandatory, this means that increases in school enrollment are driven by changes in the size of the school age population. Population projections indicate school enrollment (elementary and secondary) for Whites will decrease and Hispanic and other minority enrollment will increase. Changes in elementary and secondary enrollment will vary across the nation.

Figure 1. Projected Changes in School Enrollment 1996-2008

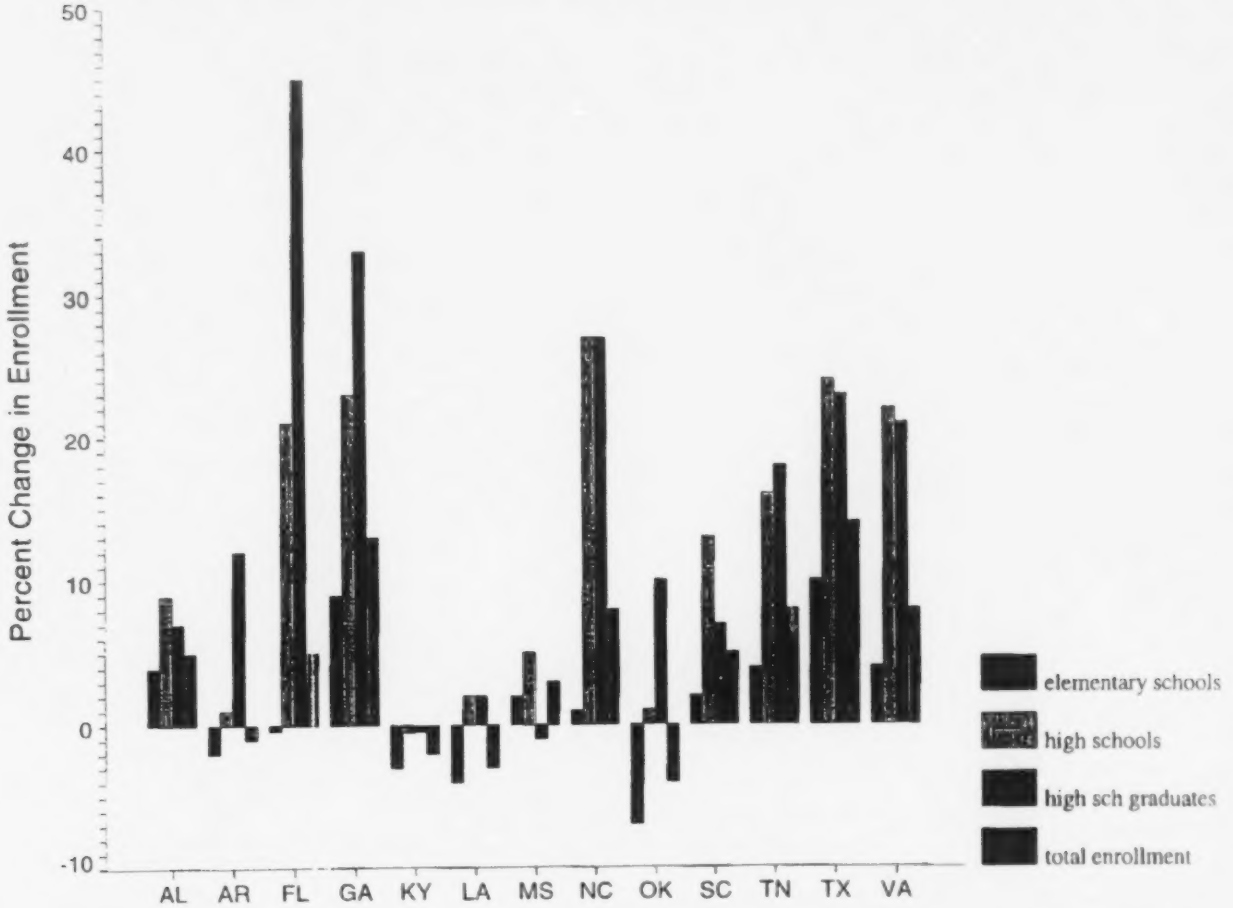


Figure 1 (previous page) indicates the projected percent change across the southern states for the period 1996-2008. We see that Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana and Oklahoma will experience decreases in total enrollment. This enrollment decreases will be driven by a decrease in elementary school enrollment. While Kentucky will experience an across-the-board enrollment decrease, Mississippi will experience a decrease only in high school graduation rates.

By far the states with the greatest percentage gains in elementary enrollment are Texas (14%) and Georgia (9%). North Carolina, Texas, Georgia, Virginia, and Florida will experience over 20 percent increase in high school enrollment (27, 24, 23, 22, and 21 respectively). However, the most dramatic increase is Florida's projected 45 percent increase in high school graduates.

Overall, the southern states region will experience 3 percent increase enrollment in public elementary schools and 16 percent enrollment increase in high schools. The highest projected increase, 20 percent, is for high school graduates.

Table 2: Hispanic Student Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment by State

	School Enrollment 1998-1999											
State	Total Kinder.	% Hispanic	Total 1st	% Hispanic	Total 10th	% Hispanic	Total 11th	% Hispanic	Total 12th	% Hispanic	Total HS Diploma	% Hispanic
Alabama	58,055	1.4	63,634	1.3	52,731	0.6	46,218	0.6	43,957	0.5	38,089	0.4
Arkansas	34,120	3.9	36,162	3.4	35,264	2.0	31,742	1.7	29,123	1.5	26,855	1.2
Florida	174,470	18.5	184,802	18.2	171,405	16.5	135,021	15.1	112,724	15.0	98,498	14.3
Georgia	112,287	5.1	114,855	4.6	95,755	2.2	81,968	2.1	71,127	2.0	58,525	1.5
Kentucky	46,900	0.9	51,451	--	49,274	0.6	43,729	0.5	39,369	0.5	37,270	0.5
Louisiana	58,922	1.4	62,808	1.4	53,319	1.2	46,531	1.3	41,479	1.4	38,030	1.2
Mississippi	39,509	0.7	43,366	0.6	34,875	0.5	29,319	0.3	26,452	0.3	24,502	0.2
North Carolina	102,603	4.7	107,679	4.4	86,952	2.0	74,806	1.8	63.476	1.5	59,292	1.4
Oklahoma	44,664	6.6	53,868	6.1	47,393	4.0	43,152	3.4	38,769	3.0	35,213	3.2
South Carolina	47,160	1.6	54,402	1.5	46,768	0.9	39,654	0.8	36,637	0.9	31,951	--
Tennessee	71,870	2.0	75,855	1.8	63,426	1.1	55,837	1.0	49,440	1.0	57,236	--
Texas	290,432	42.8	318,863	41.9	273,161	34.5	240,751	32.6	212,503	31.2	197,186	30.6
Virginia	84,154	4.9	89,967	4.7	79,387	3.7	71,212	3.4	67,787	3.2	61,777	2.7

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Surveys
-- data not available

Most of the projected enrollment growth is expected to occur by 2002. And most will be due to the increase in minority populations, especially Latinos. Table 2 provides a cross-section for 1998-1999 Hispanic enrollment across the southern states. The data indicates the Latino increases are greater at the lower grades and diminish as the group moves up in grade level.

Table 3: Hispanics in Public Elementary and Secondary Education by State

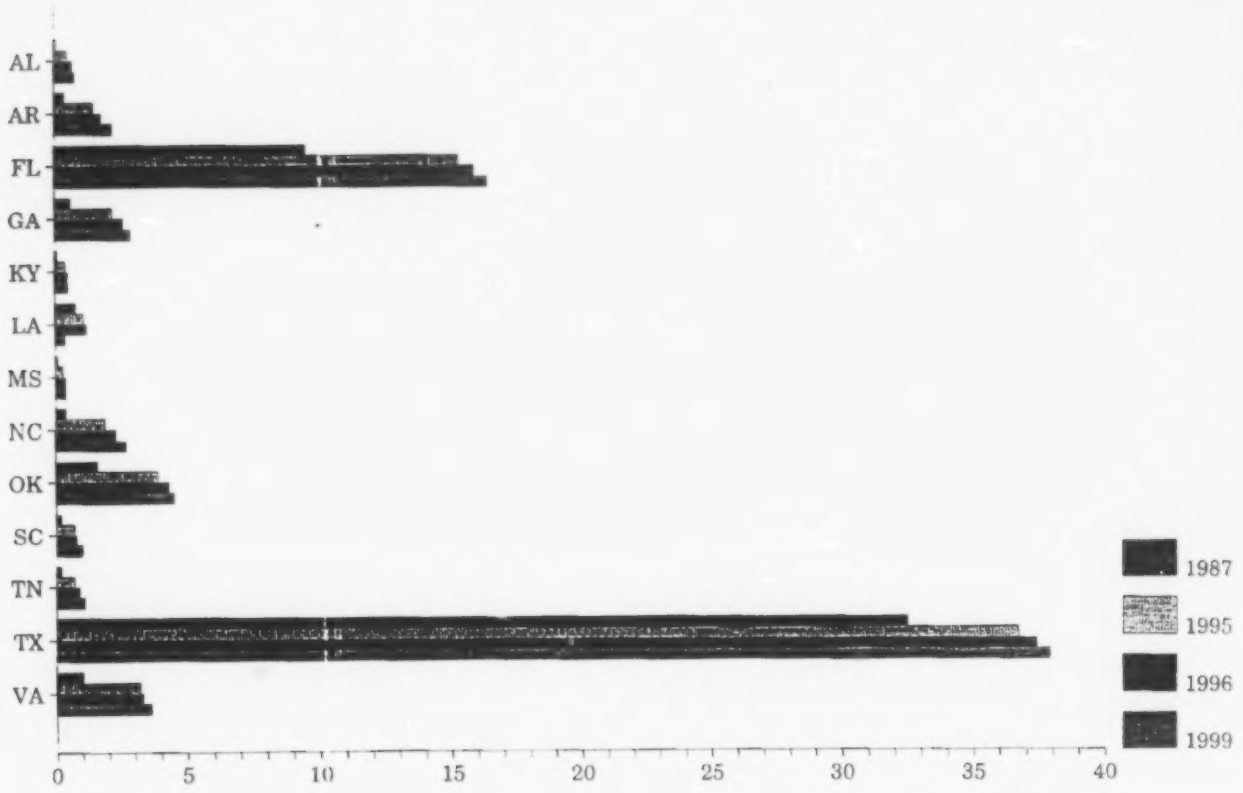
	Percent of Total Enrollment			
State	1987-1988	1990-1991	1996-1997	1997-1998
Alabama	0.1	0.7	0.7	0.8
Arkansas	0.4	1.0	1.8	2.2
Florida	9.5	13.6	15.9	16.4
Georgia	0.6	1.5	2.6	2.9
Kentucky	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.5
Louisiana	0.8	2.1	1.2	1.2
Mississippi	0.1	0.6	0.4	0.4
North Carolina	0.4	1.1	2.3	2.7
Oklahoma	1.6	4.0	4.3	4.5
South Carolina	0.2	0.9	0.8	1.0
Tennessee	0.2	0.8	0.9	1.1
Texas	32.5	32.8	37.4	37.9
Virginia	1.0	2.7	3.3	3.6

Data Source: State Profiles of Public Elementary and Secondary Education

Figure 2 (Table 3) illustrates the Latino enrollment trend in public elementary and secondary schools between 1987 and 1999 for the southern states. Every state has had a

significant increase in overall Latino enrollment in the elementary and secondary public schools.

Figure 2. Latino Enrollment in Public Elementary & Secondary Schools



Source: U.S. Department of Education (NCES)

Hispanic Academic Achievement

As indicated previously, the increased growth of the Latino population in the United States has not been accompanied by a significant improvement in the educational progress for Hispanics. Notwithstanding the gains in Latino scholarship, bilingual

education, increased high school retention and graduation rates, the most significant challenge facing the Latino community and the nation continues to be the low education achievement level among Latinos. Over two thirds (67.9 %) of poor Latino family heads of households do not have a high school diploma, compared to 42.8 percent of white householders. And in 1999, among Latinos 25 years and older, only 56.1 percent of Latinos 25 had graduated from high school, compared to 87.8 percent of whites (Current Population Report, 2000).

The percent of school age Latinos not in school or high school graduates far exceeds the white reference group. In 1999, according to NCES (2000) data, almost 11 percent (10.8) of Latino 16-17 year-olds were not in high school nor were they high school graduates. Only 6 percent Whites in the same age group were not in school or had not achieved a high school diploma. Among the 18-19 year olds, the gap is even greater. Approximately 30 percent (29.5%) of Latinos were not attending school nor had they graduated. In contrast, only12.6 percent of whites were neither attending school nor had they graduated from high school. Among the 20-21 year olds, over 38 percent were not in school nor had they graduated, in contrast to less than 12 percent of Whites. Over the last 2 decades the Latino-White high school completion rate gap has persisted around 30 percentage points. The Mexican American-White gap is even greater.

Enrollment in Preprimary Education:

The problem starts very early. Participation in early childhood education can help prepare a child for school. National figures indicate that in 1999 Hispanic children were seriously underrepresented in preprimary education programs (NCES 2000-062, 2000).

Table 4. Percent Enrollment in Preprimary Education by Student Characteristics for Selected Years

Student Characteristics	3 year-olds					4 year-olds					5 year-olds				
	1991	1993	1995	1996	1999	1991	1993	1995	1996	1999	1991	1993	1995	1996	1999
Total	**42.6**	**40.6**	**41.0**	**42.6**	**45.6**	**61.7**	**63.1**	**65.4**	**64.4**	**70.1**	**89.8**	**91.1**	**93.2**	**92.3**	**93.4**
White	44.8	40.8	44.0	44.6	46.7	61.4	63.6	65.8	65.3	69.3	89.5	90.7	92.6	91.8	92.9
Black	45.4	47.1	44.6	49.8	59.6	71.7	68.5	72.9	79.3	81.4	94	93.2	94.5	95.5	98.5
Hispanic	24.9	32.8	22.4	28.4	25.6	51.5	50.7	50.1	48.8	63.6	86.2	90.7	93.2	90.1	88.6

Source: U.S. Department of Education (NCES), The Condition of Education 2000

Table 4 provides preprimary enrollment trends between 1991 and 1999. The trend shows that the percent of 3 year-old Hispanic children enrolled in program-based preprimary education has increased slightly, the White-Hispanic gap remains approximately 20 percentage points. Hispanics have made more significant advances in the enrollment of 4 year-olds. Hence the White-Hispanic gap has decreased considerably. Among the 5 year-olds greater increases for White 5 year-olds has served to actually widen the gap between White-Hispanic enrollment.

Academic Outcomes

Once enrolled, academic performance is a critical factor in student retention and academic success. Students are assessed through standardized national assessments that measure academic performance relative to predefined standards. In this way, student achievement measures provide patterns in students' educational achievement throughout the United States. Moreover, assessment results allow us to examine the achievement gap between subgroups in the student population. Table 5 provides national White-Hispanic achievement differences in writing and mathematics at different age/grade levels for several years. During the 20-year period (1977-1996), the gap between White and Hispanic students at the three age categories has remained fairly constant. The pattern shows the gap actually widens ever so slightly from one age category to the next. The emerging pattern in writing performance indicates a 20 to 25 point gap across the age categories and the 12-year span. The most dramatic shift is for the 11th grade students. Here Hispanics reduced the gap from 38 to 20 points.

Table 5. Mathematics and Science: Multiple Years of Average Proficiency Scores

	Mathematics								Writing Performance					
	1977	1982	1986	1990	1992	1994	1996		1984	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996
9 year-olds								4th Graders						
White	230	229	232	238	239	240	239	White	211	215	211	217	214	216
Hispanic	192	189	199	206	205	201	207	Hispanic	189	190	184	189	189	191
13 year-olds								8th Graders						
White	256	257	259	264	267	267	266	White	272	269	262	279	272	271
Hispanic	213	226	226	232	238	232	232	Hispanic	247	250	246	265	252	246
17 year-olds								11th Graders						
White	298	293	298	301	304	306	307	White	297	296	293	294	291	289
Hispanic	262	249	259	262	270	261	269	Hispanics	259	274	277	274	271	269

Table 6. State Profiles of Public Elementary and Secondary Education 1996-97

	Achievement Scores*			Achievement Scores**		
	Grade 8 Mathematics			Grade 8 Science		
	Average	Below Basic	Above Basic	Average	Below Basic	Above Basic
United States	**270.5**	**39.1**	**60.9**	**148.5**	**40.4**	**59.6**
Alabama	256.6	54.8	45.2	138.7	52.8	47.2
Arkansas	261.7	48.1	51.9	144.2	45.4	54.6
Florida	263.6	46.3	53.7	142.1	49.0	51.0
Georgia	262.5	48.9	51.1	141.6	50.5	49.5
Kentucky	266.6	43.5	56.5	147.3	42.4	57.6
Louisiana	252.4	61.5	38.5	132.4	59.7	40.3
Mississippi	250.2	64.4	35.6	133.0	60.7	39.3
North Carolina	267.8	43.9	56.1	146.6	43.6	56.4
Oklahoma	--	--	--	--	--	--
South Carolina	260.8	51.8	48.2	138.5	55.0	45.0
Tennessee	263.1	47.0	53.0	143.1	46.9	53.1
Texas	270.2	40.6	59.4	145.1	45.1	54.9
Virginia	269.8	41.5	58.5	149.3	40.9	59.1

* scale 0 to 500

** scale 0 to 300

Source: U. S. Department of Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP 1996 Mathematics Report for the Nation and the States.

Table 6 compares 8th grade mathematics and science achievement scores across the southern states and the United States national average. Figure 3 (next page) provides a graphic representation of the science score differences between the South and the U.S. and the different student groups. Figure 4 (next page) provides a comparison among the different states and the United States.

Figure 3. Proficiency Scores: 8th Grade Science

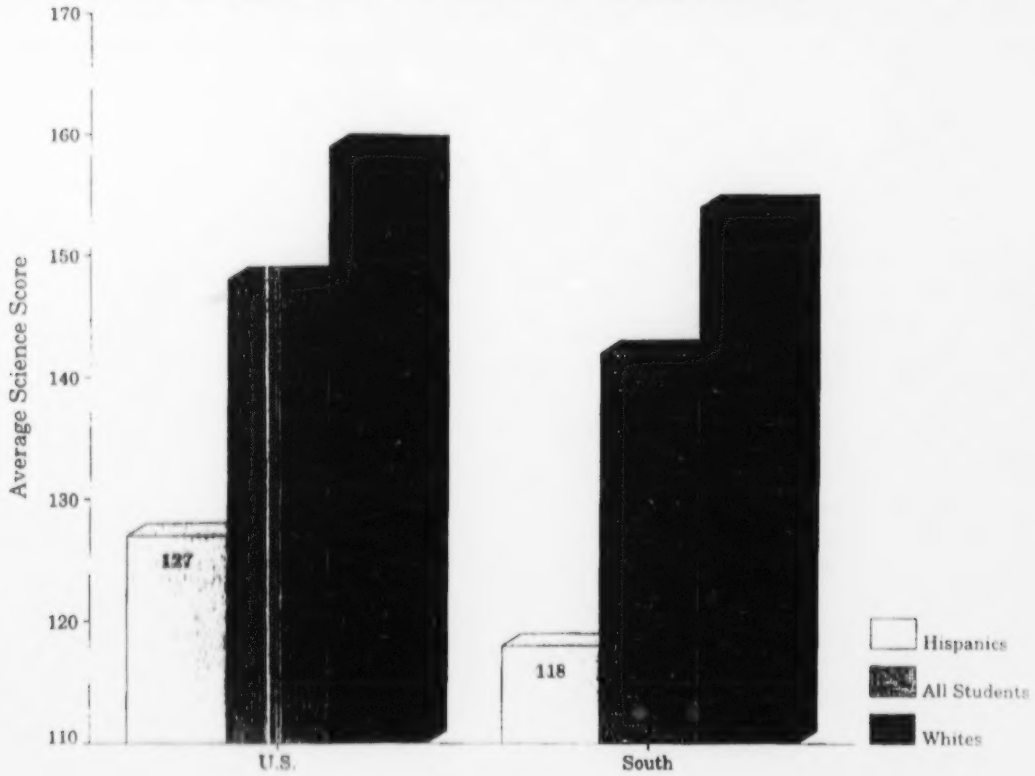
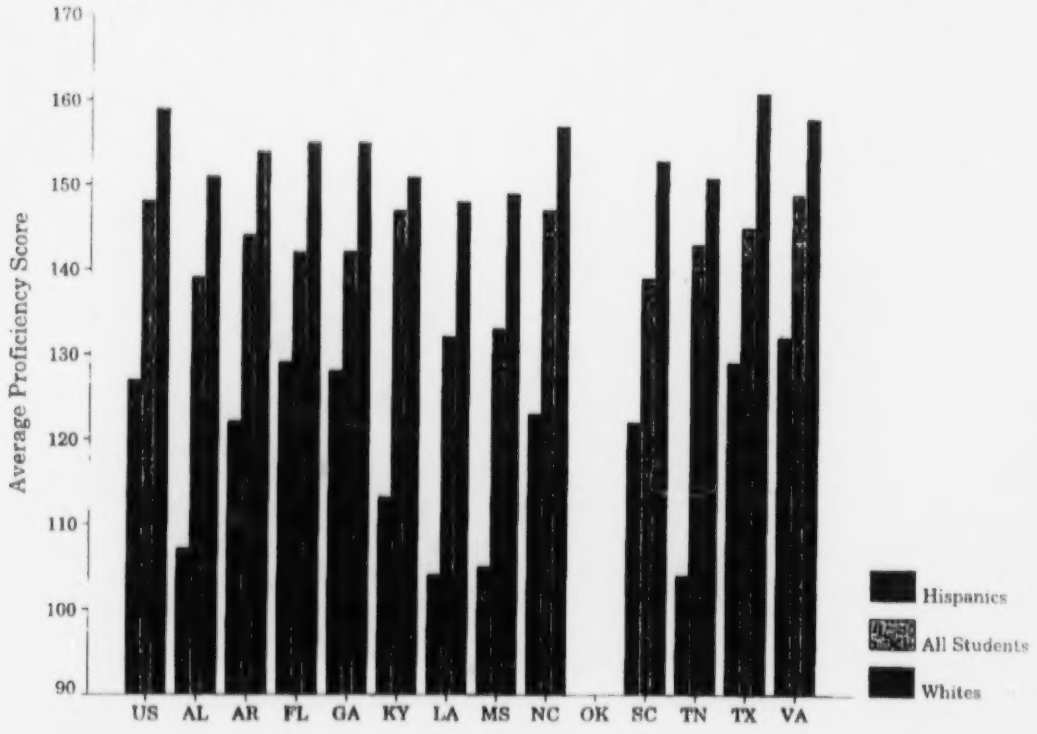


Figure 4. 1996 Average Proficiency Scores in Science 8th Graders



Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, NEAP

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Virginia is the only state that has a score above the national average in 8th grade science (149.3 vs. 148.5). Figure 4 also illustrates White-Hispanic score differences. A word of caution, according to the NAEP, Arkansas and South Carolina did not satisfy one or more of the guidelines for school sample participation rates. The data is subject to appreciable non-response bias.

Figure 5. 8th Grade Math Proficiency

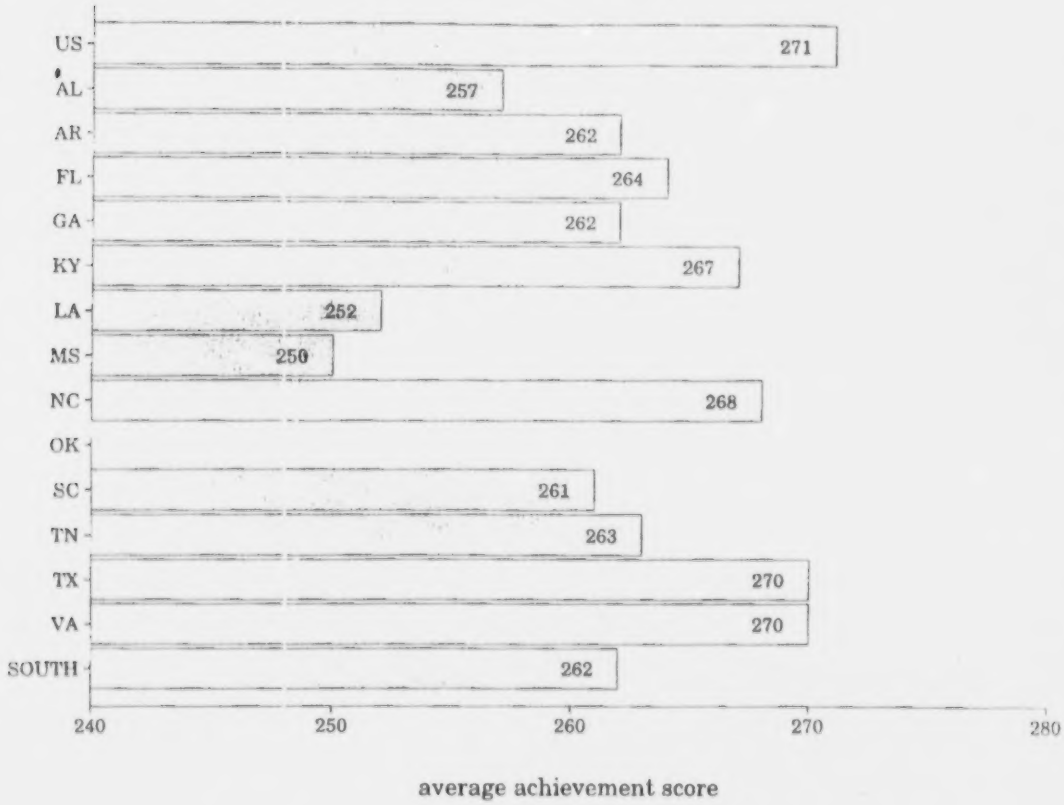

Figure 5 illustrates the 8th grade mathematics proficiency scores across the different states, the region, and the United States. None of the states achieve the national achievement scores in mathematics.

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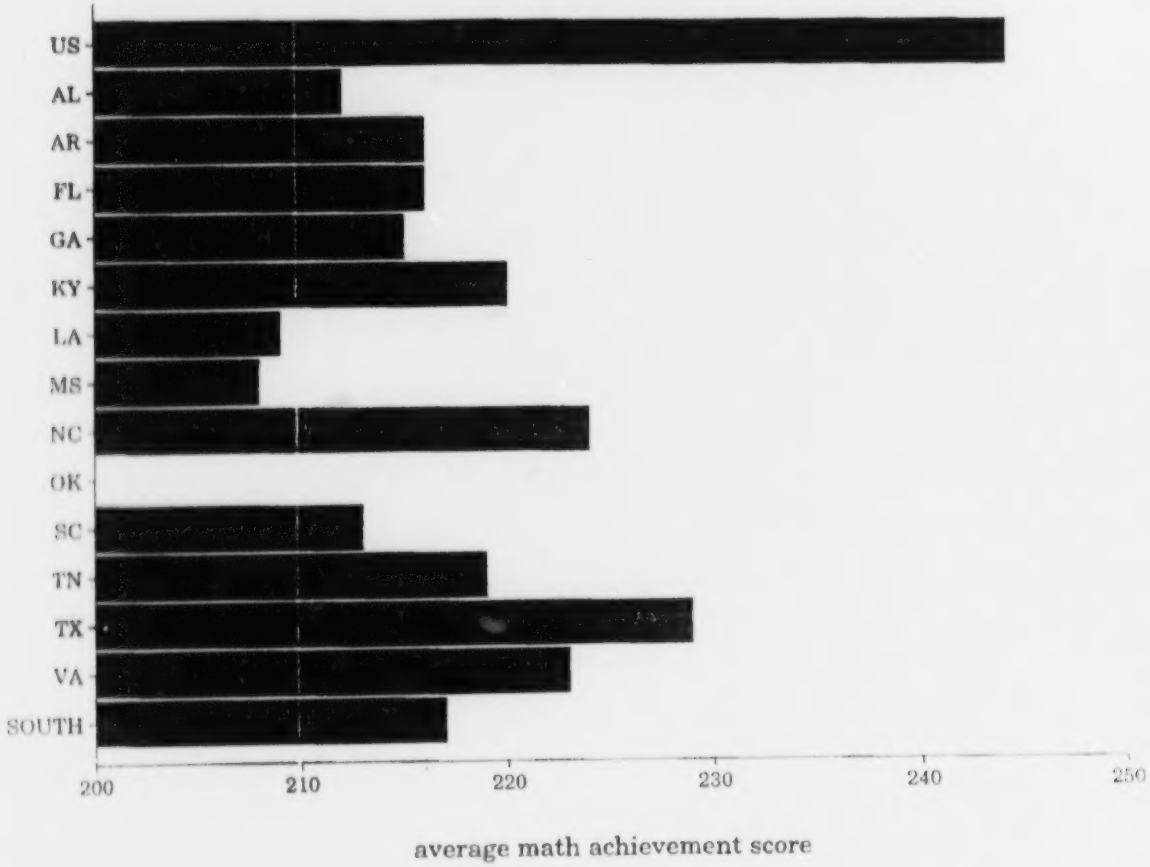
Figure 6 depicts the fourth grade math proficiency scores. A considerable gap exists between the national and the south math scores.

Figure 6. 4th Grade Math Proficiency



In the area of reading, Hispanic proficiency is significantly lower both at the national and regional level (Figure 7, next page). Figure 8 (next page) illustrates differences among the different states, the region, and the United States. Also depicted in Figure 8 are White-Hispanic differences within each state, the region, and the United States.

Figure 7. Proficiency Scores: 4th Grade Reading

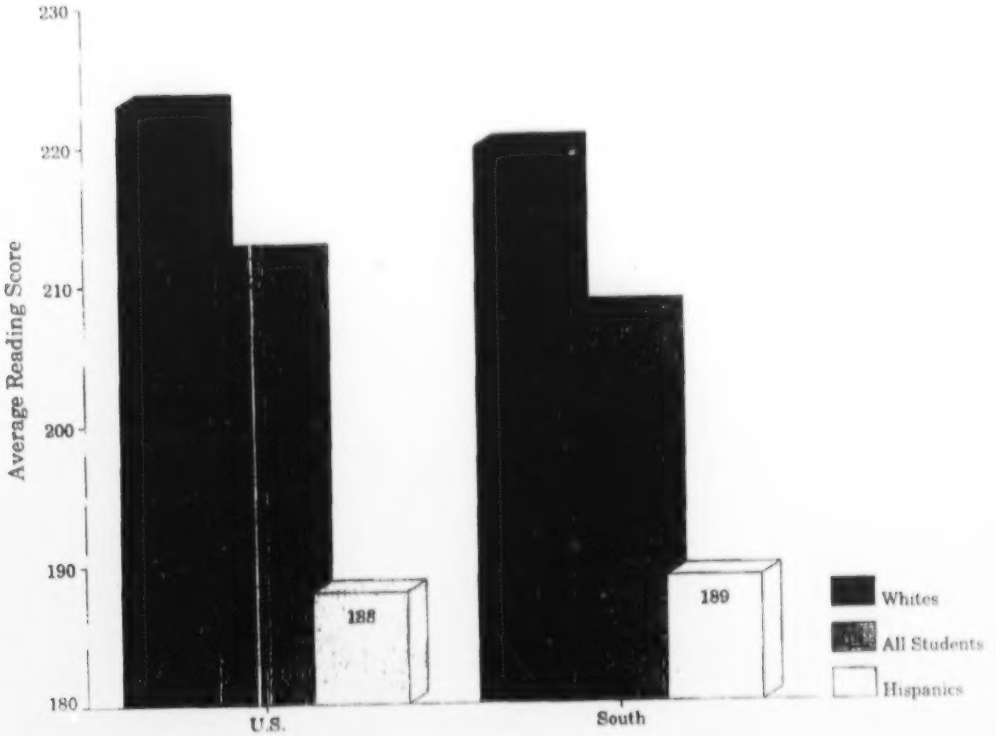
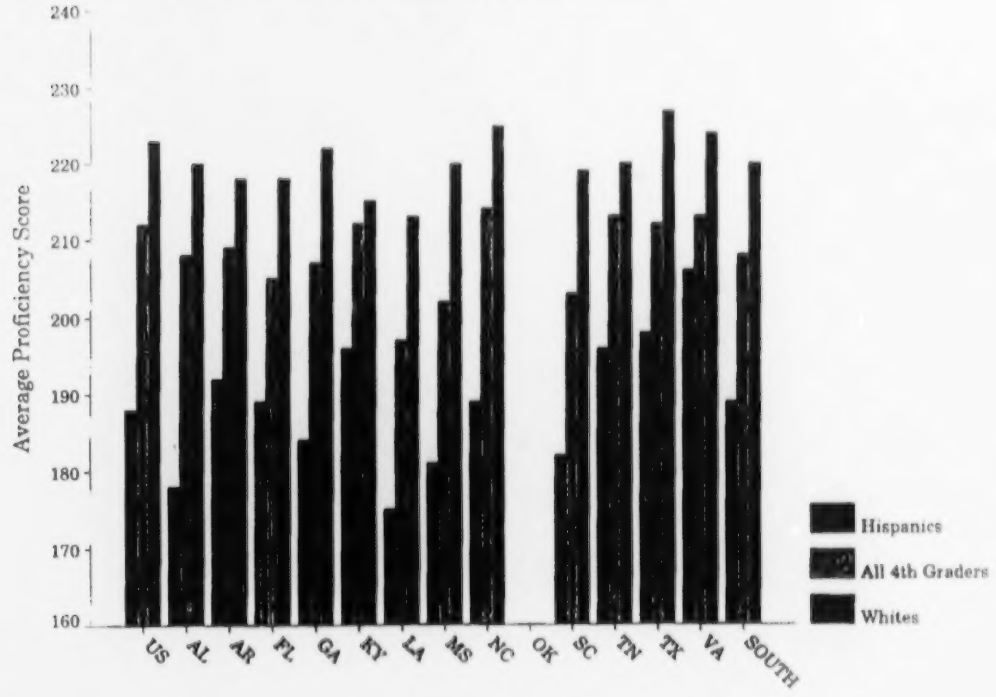


Figure 8. 4th Grade Reading Proficiency



Source: U.S. Department of Education.NCES/NAEP 1996

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Graduation and Dropout Rates

When it comes to Hispanics and academic performance perhaps no other academic marker gets more attention than the final outcomes, graduation and dropout rates. The staggering dropout rate for Hispanics is 2.5 times the rate for blacks and 3.5 times the rate for non-Hispanic whites (Secada, Chavez-Chavez, Garcia, Muñoz, Oakes, Santiago-Santiago, and Slavin 1998). Gaps in school completion rates between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students remain even after controlling for social class background, language proficiency, and immigrant status. Over the last 25 years, close to one third of the 16-through 24-year-old Hispanics in the United States were reported as out of school and lacking a high school credential (NCES 1999-082, 2000). In 1997, Hispanics were disproportionally represented among status dropouts, a total of 1.2 million. That is, 25.3 percent of all Hispanic young adults ages 16- through 24-year-olds were classified as dropouts. (NCES 1999-082, 2000).

As a region, the South has a comparatively high dropout rate. In October 1999, the highest percent of all high school status dropouts was in the South, 39.6 percent. The lowest was in the Northeast, 13.9 percent. Hispanics' share of the overall status dropout was 37.7 percent. Table 7 provides a somewhat incomplete picture of the dropout and completion rates for Latinos across the southern states. In general, the Latino dropout rates far exceed the Latino enrollment rates. In contrast, rarely do the Latino high school graduation rates equal Latino enrollment in the 12th grade, much less enrollment in general. So while the overall Latino involvement in education appears to be improving, we must put it in perspective. The 63.4 percent high school completion rate in 1999 was definitely better than the 56.2 percent in 1972, but it was considerably lower than the 66.6 percent in 1985. Which was appreciably lower than the completion rate of whites.

Table 7. Hispanic High School Completion and Dropout Rates by State

	Percent of 9th -12th Grade Dropouts		Pct of HS Graduates	Hispanics as a Percent of 12th Enrollment & Graduates			
	1994-95	1996-97	1996-97	1997-98		1998-99	
				12th Grade	Hi Sch Graduates	12th Grade	Hi Sch Graduates
Alabama	6.2	9.9	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.4
Arkansas	8.2	9.2	1.2	1.4	--	1.5	1.2
Florida	--	--	14.0	14.4	14.4	15.0	14.3
Georgia	12.5	11.8	1.4	1.8	1.4	2.0	1.5
Kentucky	--	--	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5
Louisiana	17.6	13.9	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.2
Mississippi	5.5	5.9	0.6	0.3	--	0.3	0.2
North Carolina	--	--	1.1	--	1.1	1.5	1.4
Oklahoma	--	--	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.2
South Carolina	3.3	--	--	0.7	--	0.9	--
Tennessee	--	8.2	0.6	0.7	0.6	1.0	--
Texas	--	--	29.8	31.0	29.8	31.2	30.6
Virginia	--	8.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Education (NCES) Dropout Rates in the United States
U.S. Department of Education, (NCES) Common Core of Data Surveys (various years)

Dropping out is not a random act. School dropout is the logical outcome of the social forces that limit Hispanics' role in society. Faced with the lingering evidence of institutional bias against Hispanics, dropping out makes logical sense.

Discussion/Recommendations

We know that socioeconomic disadvantages coupled with linguistic differences place Latinos in a uniquely disadvantaged position in today's education and technological age. How well Latinos access the information highway and participate in this technology depends not only on their inherent abilities and desires but also on how the educational resources are funneled to meet their needs. Changes in the level of Latino participation in the educational system mean that changes in resources, such as qualified teachers, facilities, and funding levels need to be made. In addition, changes in the educators' mindset (myths and stereotypes) must occur in order to address the inequality of access and participation for Latinos.

We need to (1) *establish individual relationship with Hispanic students*, and (2) *communicate high academic expectations of them*. But most importantly, we need to *provide them with meaningful opportunities to achieve those expectations*. Our efforts need to be a concerted and long-term investment of human and fiscal resources in order to generate changes that will benefit Latinos, their communities, and ultimately society in general.

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[6] For the purpose of this paper the South includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

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